



TO: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager
FROM: Larry Harala, Associate Planner, Planning and Development Services
Peter Huffman, Director, Planning and Development Services
COPY: City Council and City Clerk
SUBJECT: Resolution – Setting Public Hearing date for the proposed Open Space Current Use Assessment – February 19, 2019
DATE: February 1, 2019

SUMMARY:

A resolution setting Tuesday, March 5, 2019, as the date for a public hearing before the City Council for the proposed Open Space Current Use Assessment application for the property located at 811 North Karl Johan Avenue.

STRATEGIC POLICY PRIORITY:

- Strengthen and support a safe city with healthy residents.
- Ensure all Tacoma residents are valued and have access to resources to meet their needs.
- Assure outstanding stewardship of the natural and built environment.

A balanced and well-developed system of open space is an essential component of a prosperous, livable, and sustainable Tacoma.

BACKGROUND:

The Open Space Current Use Assessment Program (Program), enacted by the state legislature through RCW 84.34, is a voluntary program to incentivize private conservation of open space assets valuable to the general public. For properties within an incorporated city, Pierce County and the city jointly review the proposals. If approved, the property tax rate would be reduced in exchange for a voluntary agreement from the property owners to leave the site undeveloped and in its natural state. Property owners may remove their property from the program at any time, paying back taxes and a penalty if they do so within 10 years of entering the Program.

In July 2018, the City of Tacoma received a program application submitted by Karl and Christine Anderson for property at 811 North Karl Johan Avenue (Parcel Numbers: 0220032010 and 0221343116) to be assessed at its current use as open space for property tax purposes. The application has been reviewed by the Planning Commission (Commission), in accordance with the procedural requirements set forth in RCW 84.34.037 and Tacoma Municipal Code 13.08.030 and against the Public Benefit Rating System evaluation criteria as set forth in RCW 84.34.037. The Commission, upon completing its review, including conducting a public hearing on December 5, 2018, made a recommendation to the City Council for approval of the application. On January 9, 2019, the Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability (IPS) Committee reviewed the application as recommended by the Commission and forwarded its recommendations to the City Council to approve the application and support a property tax reduction of 90 percent of assessed value for the applicable area.

Per RCW 84.34.037, final action on the application may be taken either through separate affirmative acts (after a public hearing) by the City Council and the County Council, in cases when both bodies concur on the final decision; or by a Joint Determining Authority composed of three members of each Council.



ISSUE:

To fulfill customer service and administrative efficiency, it is considered to be in the best interest of the City of Tacoma that the City Council conduct a public hearing and subsequently consider an affirmative action on the application.

ALTERNATIVES:

The current use assessment is a voluntary open space conservation program that preserves open space benefits at a relatively low cost to the public. The City Council could recommend denial, potentially risking the loss of the open space benefits provided by the site and surrounding area.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the City Council set Tuesday, March 5, 2019, as the date for a public hearing on the proposed Open Space Current Use Assessment application for the property located at 811 North Karl Johan Avenue.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact related to setting the public hearing date. In the future, granting the applicant's request for current use assessment on the undeveloped portions of the property, per the Public Benefit Rating System criteria, would result in a 90 percent assessment reduction on portions of the two subject parcels. Pierce County has provided a preliminary estimate of approximately \$1,000 per year tax savings to the property owner, should this request be granted.